

Service User Feedback Report

Cumbria SEND Information, Advice and Support Service

March 2021

This report is an analysis of the service user feedback received from parents, carers, and professionals who had a service from the Cumbria SEND Information, Advice and Support Service from June 2020 to March 2021.

The five part-time SEND IAS Co-ordinators and the manager send a link to an on-line service user questionnaire to parents and carers they work with at the end of an intervention. This gives families a chance to feedback on the service they have had from our co-ordinators.

During this period, 42 replies were received:

- 7 from Furness and South Lakes,
- 6 from Copeland and Allerdale and
- 29 from Carlisle and Eden.

There is a range of closed, graded and open questions on the questionnaire and they are designed to measure satisfaction with the outcomes of the service, the level of service provided by the staff and offer suggestions on the ways the service could be improved.

Analysis of Feedback to the questions

Where did you hear about the service? (Service users can tick more than one box)

It is helpful to learn the range of places from where parents had heard about the service and some ticked more than one box:

Source	Percentage of respondents
Word of mouth	26%
Used the service before	18%
Educational setting	26%
Internet	16%
Health Colleagues	8%
Children's Services Colleagues	11%
Support Groups for Parents	16%

Why did you contact the SEND IAS Service? (Can tick more than one box)

Parents who responded to the questionnaire had contacted the service for various reasons over this period:

Reason for seeking support	Percentage of respondents
Support available for children with SEND	43%
Process for obtaining EHC Plan	33%
Help to resolve an issue	46%
Support at a meeting	41%
General support about their concerns	48%
Advice on how to appeal a decision	26%
Information on changing schools	10%
Health Services	6%

	Not at all easy 0	1	2	3	Very Easy 4
How easy was it to get in touch with us?	0%	0%	9%	17%	74%

	Not at all helpful 0	1	2	3	Very Helpful 4
How helpful was the information and advice we gave you?	0%	3%	0%	7%	90%

	Not at all 0	1	2	3	Very 4
How neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we are?	2.5%	0%	0%	2.5%	95%

	No	Yes
Was the service you received confidential?	2%	98%

What difference has our information, advice and support made to you?	No difference at all 0	1	2	3	A great deal of difference 4
	3%	0%	0%	17%	80%

These are some of the positive comments made by parents about the difference having a SEND IASS Co-ordinator to support them has made:

“When I am under so much stress from being a 'single' parent, and dealing with very hard days and sometimes nights, Lucy's help has been essential for me to compete all the paperwork.”

“Polly was very helpful and supportive. She listened and gave me up to date information and advice.”

“I wouldn't have known where to start with the legalities around my son's exclusion without the help of SENDIASS.”

“If it wasn't for the service, my son wouldn't be getting the extra support at school because I just kept getting fobbed off by professionals.”

“IASS Coordinator took the time to listen, answer questions, explain various possible choices, provided copies of forms and signposted where to get further information. And supported in meetings. Invaluable.”

“Tracey has been an immense support to myself & my family during this very stressful time with the school attempting to off roll my disabled son.”

“Sally was able to offer advice I would otherwise not have known. She was brilliant in talking me through the complex EHCP process and made things much more accessible.”

“It is invaluable to have a local source of advice. It is fine to gain information from websites but SENDIASS pull the support together and provide a professional and personal service.”

One respondent was not very happy with the service they had received and said they thought the Co-ordinator did not have enough knowledge or experience of tribunal paperwork and processes.

Since contacting the SEND IAS Service is your child any better supported at school and making progress?

The survey results to this question were that 59% of parents thought their children were better supported at school and 13% said they were not. 28% said they did not know.

Closed Questions on Staff Behaviours

Did the IAS staff:	No	Yes
Return your calls/emails promptly?	0%	100%
Keep in touch?	0%	100%
Explain why decisions were made and what was happening?	3%	97%
Listen to your views?	3%	97%
Treat you with respect?	3%	97%
Explain who they were and what their role was?	3%	97%

The very positive responses to the above questions show that parents and carers have found the standards of service they have received to be very good and are very satisfied with staff behaviours.

	No	Yes
Did the service you receive meet your needs?	3%	97%

	Very unsatisfied 0	1	2	3	Very satisfied 4
Overall, how satisfied are you with the service we gave?	2.5%	2.5%	0%	5%	90%

	Not at all likely 0	1	2	3	Very likely 4
How likely is it that you would recommend the service to others?	3%	0%	0%	4%	95%

What did we do well?

This question aims to find out what families valued about the service they had had. Respondents said the Co-ordinators responded quickly and communicated with clarity. People value the information and advice given, which they say is easy to understand, the legal knowledge of the team and the professional approach. They say the service listens to them, is caring and unbiased and helps them to explore solutions.

Some of the comments parents and carers made about what SENDIASS does well:

“Professional, friendly service. Susan was very knowledgeable and was always prepared to support me in meetings, even on her days off. I couldn’t have done it without her help.”

“At difficult times SENDIAS can get things moving. They attend meetings, provide input and support, explain situations. They listen to and understand the family dynamics.”

“They provide genuine information that is easy to understand - this is all still quite new to me and I have struggled with feeling quite 'abandoned by the system' and although not much has changed in terms of the school issues (this is partly due to Covid) I am feeling much stronger and able to deal with the situations we come across and stand up for my family.”

“Being there for parents with children who have special needs or might have and helping parents through the minefield that involves.”

“Give legal information I wouldn’t have known which has helped move things forward quicker, gave me confidence as I gained more knowledge. I don’t feel rushed. I can be myself about my situation and not feel judged.”

“Parental support and providing someone with an understanding of the legalities and procedures. This service is invaluable to us parents. Please do not reduce or remove funding!”

What do you think we could do better?

This question was included so information could be gathered on how the IAS Service could be improved. Several respondents said there was nothing to improve on and they were very happy with the service. Other parents gave the following comments:

“I guess I feel it was an accident that I found out she existed, so maybe help more parents know the service is there somehow.”

“Increase funding to this service - URGENTLY! The staff are doing their absolute best, but the volume of people needed the service increases constantly. It is unfair on the staff to be placed under such pressure.”

“It is all quite overwhelming for us. I think I would like to see more accountability when procedures are not followed by the school. Is there a complaints route within SEND at the local authority for when schools consistently fail to meet the child’s needs?”

“Be a larger team, working all the time, be given more funding so that you can assist more families when needed.”

“I think just to be more vocal about you being there - its only due to many nights of googling I managed to find the information. No one seemed to be very bothered about giving us information to enable us to get what our daughter needs. I do feel like there should be some kind of information when parents realised their child has SEN that gets sent out with links to support groups that are local, websites etc and stuff like that but I think that would be more up to individual schools than yourselves?”

“Do not feel the service is truly independent and impartial. Knowledge of EHCP and SEND tribunal process must be increased. Not knowing which forms to submit, or whether we have been given the statutory right to appeal is not acceptable.”

“I didn’t know the service existed so may be schools should let parents know about the service when you have a child with SEN as it would empower parents.”

“The advisors are stretched too thinly over a wide geographical area. SENDIAS should be better resourced to ensure more parents can access the service.”

“You need more staff so that responses are quicker.”

Summary

Strengths

The majority of respondents indicated they were very satisfied with the support they had received from the SEND IAS Service in Cumbria. Responses to the staff behaviours questions scored very highly – 100% in two cases. People value the service, they appreciate being listened to, being given good quality information and advice, having support at meetings and someone to guide them through the difficult processes of securing help and support for the children and young people. Parents feel more confident and empowered having a SEND IAS Co-ordinator by their side at meetings. Parents say that having a Co-ordinator explain what is happening or what things mean, helps parents understand the system. Help with the paperwork is something that some parents really value as dealing with this can be daunting to some families, especially those who do not have access to technology.

Areas for development

There was a comment from one parent about not getting the best support for a tribunal appeal and there should be more training for Co-ordinators around supporting parents to make an appeal against a decision made.

One parent said it was difficult to find the service and SEND IAS Service should be more proactive in promoting its services to the public. Several parents said they thought the service was underfunded and there need to be more staff to deal with all the parents who were coming forward for help. Some said that if there were more staff, they would have more time for individual families. Other parents said they thought there should be a quicker response to enquiries from this service.

There were wider issues raised by a couple of parents about things they would like to see such as:

- professionals in schools and other organisations should be giving out more information on SEND to parents when parents find out their children have SEND
- an identified process for schools being held to account if they fail to meet the child's needs.

Future plans

On closure of a case or intervention, the Cumbria SEND IASS Co-ordinators officers will continue to send out a service user feedback web link to parents they have worked with, so they may make comments on line about the service they have received and reporting will be done regularly. Parents may comment at any time as the link to the Survey Monkey questionnaire is on each staff members' email signature.

This report will be circulated to the AD for Integration and Partnerships and the SEND IAS Service Manager and cascaded to SEND IASS staff for discussion at the team meeting. This report will also be uploaded to the Continuous Improvement Website.